



**These Poems Are
Not Very Good**

Ken Tomaro

These Poems Are Not Very Good
By Ken Tomaro

THESE POEMS ARE NOT VERY GOOD, ©2025

Previously published as:

HOME IS WHERE THE HEADSTONES ARE, ©2021

Originally published as:

YOUR DOG CALLED, YOUR WIFE'S ON FIRE, ©2017.

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the author...and why would you want to?

Forward

Here's all you need to know. This was my first attempt at writing poetry. I threw it on Amazon foolishly thinking it would be seen by the world. I was wrong.

I could say all sorts of bad stuff about publishing with Amazon. Screw it, I decided to pull my books, get rid of a few poems and retool the collections as a whole.

Many of the original poems will burn in the flames of hell. Words hold power and some of these poems were written about people I no longer want to have any power.

I could submit this to various literary magazines and waste my life away hoping for an acceptance. Ain't nobody got time for that so I decided to just put the retooled version on the website for people to read for free. The \$3 I make when a book sells won't make or break me.

This collection is good but not great. Also, I hate coming up with titles for my poetry. God, I hate it and these are awful.

If you see mistakes, grammatical or otherwise it's because I edited the collection myself and at the time I had a poor understanding of the English language. I still do. This collection is, as is, no warranty, no refunds.

Table of Contents:

1. There isn't one.
2. Just thumb through with your fingers.
3. You'll be ok.

UNKNOWNLY

somewhere beneath the dirt
in the backyard of the house I grew up
I unknowingly buried my childhood

every blade of grass
every leaf of every tree I ever knew

each black skid mark of my bicycle tires
in the rutty driveway
covered over and covered over
a hundred more times

every snowman made and melted

the army men burned by the sun
hidden under rocks and cement paths
is buried in that dirt

and I don't remember where

I WAS THINKING

about a frog

this particular frog burrows wherever it does
and freezes when winter blows through
literally almost freezes itself

the blood stops flowing
and organs stop pumping
putting itself in a sort of suspended animation
until Spring

and then I was thinking
why humans could not do the same

and then I remembered
we are here to do something more important than
freezing ourselves or eating bugs
I came to this realization
after I looked around and saw
all the things we had built

DOUGHY

there was a point in my life
two thousand, one hundred ninety days
give or take

where I wandered the desert of my existence,
aimlessly

I was followed by a gritty white cloud
like Pigpen
only mine was pizza flour

the good old days they were called

although I don't think I'm quite
weathered enough
to warrant such a phrase

they were good enough I suppose
in that I had
little care or worry of most things

and a pack of cigarettes
was a buck and change

but not much else
no goals, ambitions, delusions of
grandeur

no love of people or things
no filter, common sense or even a clue
as to how the world worked

just me, floating lazily in a pool
of bitter red sauce
as if it were my own blood spilling in front of me
in no particular direction

and I liked it

STREAM OF SUBCONSCIOUSNESS

the stream wrapped around a crooked tree
I used to walk barefoot in the water
and dig red clay out from the banks,
squishing it between my fingers
crayfish snapped their tiny claws
kicking up cloudy water and small stones
as I poked at them with sticks
farther on the water ran as clear as glass
and below the surface
I saw the river rocks, tiny fish and tiny toes
wiggling in the muddy bottom
the rushing water curved around a corner
disappearing into nothing
I often wondered what the nothing looked like
but never looked
grasshoppers darted through the taller patches of weeds
a colony of ants made their way
up over the crooked tree
the familiar smell of grass, evergreens, and creek water
sometimes creep to the surface from those dank places
of a decaying mind
the places we have no use for
reserved only for memories long dead
I remember things most people never think about
and the birds are here too, bouncing from tree to tree
building their nests and feeding their young
the worms are smart to stay safely underground
eventually, I think, all of us are smart
to do the very same

SOMETIMES IT'S BEST NOT TO REMEMBER

she didn't recognize us
the last time we came for a visit
and I decided
that was the last time I would see her
I no longer wanted to live with the pain
of being forgotten
all those years erased
from the cruel simplicity of
being born with bad genes
she was the lucky one,
having no memory
while I was stuck
remembering all of it

THIEVING BASTARD IN THE NIGHT

on some occasions
something sneaks into my bedroom at night
and steals my dreams
I don't feel a thing when it happens
I simply wake up
and can't remember a dream
or I recall bits,
maybe small fragments of a dream
as if this thing or goblin or a
simple petty thief
only wants me to remember
the little bits
knowing that trying to recall the rest
torments me in a way
or maybe it just got spooked
as I rolled over in my sleep
and slid back into the closet
through the cracks in the walls and windows
wherever he himself sleeps
before I wake up
a gentle inhale
and the dream flows like a forest creek
through the nose or an ear
into a vibrant river
and then again into the mouth
of a great ocean
filled with other dreams
until we are both fast asleep

NO THIS OR THAT

I just want to be
an unnoticeable blur in the background
aware of no one
no sounds
no words
no feeling
no pain
or anxiety
to ignore everything that passes by
without guilt or worry of consequence
no concern for time
no wondering what if...
no expectations of expectations
no disappointment
but by all accounts
I would not exist
and none of this would matter

JUST FIFTEEN MORE MINUTES

you might ask yourself
why there is a wormhole in the garage bay
at the local gas station
and when I say wormhole
I don't mean a hole in the dirt
where the worms wiggle and play
I mean a portal for interdimensional time travel
what does the portal to another dimension look like?
well, nothing really, or everything
trees, a sidewalk,
the bus stop or the mailbox on the corner
it looked like air
I didn't realize it was even there
until I saw the tail end of an old car
swallowed up into the swirling white hole,
which wasn't there one minute before
also, the words: TAKE THE LEAP
spray painted in red
in the grease covered floor of the local garage
only I saw this message
I asked myself;
what do you hope to find if you do take the leap?
other life, other worlds, the meaning of existence
or yesterday, today, tomorrow
or the tomorrow after that?
should I question life, the color of the sky,
dinosaurs and hurricanes
none of those had crossed my mind
I just wanted to go somewhere else
that wasn't here

I'LL BE YOUR MIRROR

I went outside for a smoke
yesterday it was seventy degrees
today, thirty-four and snowing
mid-west weather and the jokes that come with it
there was a window open
in the apartments above the shops across the street
probably some poor heavy bastard who
was forever overheated, lazy
watching reruns on a broken old TV
if he's even out of bed yet
I'd seen it plenty,
had to pull their stiff fat corpse
out of a sweat stained recliner
cram all the flabby bits and sagging parts
into a gurney
huffing and puffing
down a rickety flight of old steps
there was no family to watch because he had none
the old Polish landlady's face said it all
It could be weeks or months
before she found another to fill his spot
there's not much else to do at three in the morning
driving around with a dead man in your van
but to talk to them
it's a one-sided conversation for sure
"It's just you and me, buddy."
"You and me against the world,"
he wasn't helping much when I was
trying to get him on the cold metal table
so I guess it was just me
against the world now
I had these conversations often with the dead
their timing was terrible—
they died all the time

three in the morning
then again at four-thirty
Friday nights
Christmas
in a blinding snowstorm
or on a beautiful summer day
fat or frail
tubes hanging out of surgically sliced pieces of skin
frowns
fear that said they weren't ready
the rest of the world was living clueless
playing with their kids or shopping or
working, fucking, drinking, gambling
some waitress is wiping off a table
in the diner I am wasting an afternoon in
oblivious to the life
that had just been wiped
from the earth

IN BETWEEN BLACK, WHITE AND GRAY

an odd-looking man
whose skin is all charred
from the flames in which he stands
he is old yet unfinished
he has no eyes or a mouth
they have grown over
he has adapted as such and never moved an inch
just staring blankly and numb
with nowhere to go
there is, however,
in this frightening world
a lone tree in a naked field
where the sky is a blueish yellow
and the grass is dead brown from the sun
yet this solitary tree thrives with life
its leaves thick and bursting with color
while all around is burning death
the odd-looking man and the tree,
oblivious to each other
have found their existence
in hell and in beauty

BEAUTIFUL THINGS

sometimes the most beautiful thing
is sitting in a poorly lit room
listening to couples having sugary conversations
a boy rambling about a school project
the hiss of an expensive machine
steaming milk for a fancy coffee
hipsters talking about the fate of the world
the clang of a bell on a door opening and closing
more people streaming in and out
music from a time no one remembers
playing quietly overhead
the clicking of the keys on the cash register
hoodies and hats
puffy winter coats
gloves with holes
worn out floors and puke-colored walls
a sense of urgency
lists of things to do today
and anxieties about the things
there was no time for
and knowing
I'm not responsible
for any of it

INSULATED

It has been difficult to sleep lately
with a mouse in the walls
his scratchy little nails echo
like some unsolvable mathematical formula
scribbled across a chalkboard by
a gray-haired old scientist on the brink of insanity
to the architect of this old house I offer sincerest praise
the acoustics rival that
of any great concert hall
stuck in a maze of wood and wires
insulated from the outside world
sniffing out bits of food and sleeping
in a nest of old newspapers and clumps of garbage
I understand him and he understands me
both wandering, night after night,
aimlessly but with purpose
waiting to live or die
I understand him but have no remorse in
wanting him to die
for my own sanity
...filthy squatter

CHERRY LIME RICKY

I think I may have mentioned
finding comfort in the smoky darkness
of a time worn dive bar
but not always
sometimes I feel like no more
than another shit stain
in another shitty bar
on some other shitty side of town
a permanent discoloration
obvious but ignored
wanting so much to tear myself from the walls
and trickle out the door under drunk footsteps
and spilled beer
and stale popcorn
to somewhere better
but there is nowhere better
they all look the same
smell the same
feel the same
and the people are all the same
drunk
pretending to be happy
while trying to forget the shittiness
pretending they are all the best of friends
but when they go home alone
and crawl into their unmade beds
they cry about the shit
and wonder how it ended up this way

CHEERS

I hear the birds chirping loudly
as I walk the streets to work
I like to believe
they are cheering for me
when no one else will
telling me
in their chatter that I can do this—
take the steps into another day
when others see no point

it is an easy thing to do
when your eyes are crusted with defeat
but still they sit there
in the naked trees
on a frozen morning
not looking for a warmer place
but cheering me on

MOURNING SUNSHINE

it is strange what we mourn
and what we do not
a television character
but not a real person
instead we hide in a place
dark and stale
with our own thoughts
tattered shreds of regret
hanging over us
like sharp bony fingers
from the ceiling above
and instead of standing tall
breaking through them head on
without fear
we cower
step lightly around them
avoid them
and act if they don't exist
even though a tiny ray of light
shimmers off the rough edges
in front of us
they are there
but also not

IT IS

I think it is entirely possible
to create a story from every moment of your life
every breath, every movement
something

it feels heavy when I walk,
sacks of cement draped across my shoulders
I want to paint but I don't
I want to write but I don't
I don't want to drink
or move
my body is raging with energy
but none at all

reindeer forage for something to eat in the thin grass
and angels blow their trumpets at the sky
as the frigid air cuts through the back of my neck
like a sword made of ice
everything is loud, too loud
tree branches cast a spider web shadow
under the half-hidden moon

I inhale the cold stale air from a crackling cigarette,
exhale the sour taste of liquor from hours before
and so I wrote and fell asleep

GREEN

an apple falls from the tree
it is that time of year
the smell of pies to be made
hangs in the air
bees and flies and gnatty bugs
buzzing around the rotted flesh
humid under the dense covering of branches
the tiniest leaf green caterpillars
hang in midair swaying back and forth,
dancing, attached to nothing at all
toward the top of the hill-
Hanna is there, she waves
her father is a Rabbi and
I have never heard him speak
they are of no interest to me, girls
I'm too young
there are too many trees to climb
later, with age, I will come to understand,
they are not meant to be understood
the Virgin Mary, hidden among the ivy
shrouded in white, watches over
arms stretched out
accepting of all
insects burrow through clay thick tunnels in the dirt
and under rock
I put the rock back as I found it
it drops with a hallow thud
but leaves them undisturbed mostly
the trees wave to one another
to me
I have seen the edge of the world
through their branches
birds chatter playfully with each other
nudging for a drink of water

in the stone bath
It is weathered and cracked
hot to the touch with no shade from the sun
a snake weaves through the tall grass and disappears
into the green of it all

DREAMING

and so I gave one good push
off and away from the sun
and gracefully spun
end over end into space
into an ocean of stars
and trailing tales of light
bleeding, soaking into the canvas of the universe
speckled white-yellow dots
splashed in a cosmic sneeze
splattered into the black
that no painting could ever duplicate
although they have tried
no one has succeeded
they should know better
that you cannot recreate a force
that is constantly
changing

~~CERULEAN DREAMS~~

the empty tube makes sucking sounds
a wet fart of failure
the blues and yellows, brown, green
are mixing more like insults
rather than compliments
my life
my coffee
my art
share the same dark and bitter elements
nutty yet bold with slight floral undertones
my hands clench
choking the tube of paint
for one last breath of color
it gurgles and spurts
with nothing left to give
the sky has been drooling for days
and with it my mind
the brushes are dried and stiff,
lifeless and parched
the walls are spattered in a hundred
specks of colors never seen before
a worktable is covered in rough canyons
of reds and blues
and the chair is dripping with colors
that do not exist
a masterpiece in itself
canvases are piled in the corner covered
in ideas lost in translation
covering mistakes with mistakes
happy accidents
creation is
cathartic
therapeutic
panic and madness

a single drop of cerulean blue
is all I need to finish
but there is no more
god damn it!
god damn it, the vision is dead
the dried paint beneath my fingernails
covering my hands and clothes
is the finest thing I have created today
the need to create, constant but tiring
I will think about it in my sleep
and tomorrow when I wake
and on my death bed

JERKING OFF IN THE AFTERLIFE

I am not religious
but to know me is to accept this
as a blatantly obvious statement
there is a spiritual side though, to my life
with so much more for us in the afterlife
the loved ones who have passed
do watch over us
lend a ghostly hand when needed
you will not find facts of this in the science books
more so in the recesses of a confident mind
they watch, not all the time of course
if that were the case
I would spend my life
jumping off buildings
running through fire
and standing in front of racing bullets
laughing at my immortality
I wonder what they do in their off time
do they watch us while we masturbate?
or jerk us awake from a deep sleep
just for kicks

YES, I'M STILL HERE

I was awakened from an unsettling dream
where I was fucking a strange woman
then there were spiders and insects
then I was thrashing around face down
in a swimming pool
It was 4:10 am
no one wakes up at such an ungodly hour
unless there is a reason for it
so I sat for a moment
wondering what the significance of the time was
it had to mean something
I listened to the noises outside the window
and to the creaking of the walls
staring into the darkness
the cat stretched and shifted at the end of the bed
and the darkness was still pitch black
there were sirens in the distance
bits of moonlight bled through the cracks
of the window shades
and I remembered the exact day
the exact time
she had left us

MISSED IT BY THAT MUCH

at the end of our street was a cul-de-sac
that trailed off into death if you weren't careful
I was going for speed
and the handlebars of my bicycle would not turn
I saw things flash in front of me
and my heart ejected from my chest before
I was able to swerve at the last second
I was watching the fireworks
in the neighbor's driveway across the street
and was almost kidnapped
I turned for some reason to look over my shoulder
and he was there, the man in black
not the singer of country music
but the blackness of the devil
coming to take me to hell
I was almost splashed across the pavement by a car
running for the school bus
I was late
I almost electrocuted myself
playing with things I had no knowledge of
almost choked to death
almost poisoned, flattened by a train
someone, I think, really wants me to die
or someone else
wants me to live
I think now there is a purpose to my life
but I think that purpose
is to live a life of almosts

DESTINED FOR MEDIOCRITY

they say there will be
plenty of time to sleep when we are dead
if that is at all accurate
then I have slept
most of my life away
they also tell you life is good or
imagine what you want,
and it's yours for the taking
a tiny blossom blooms into a great forest
just who are these people
and why do they know so much
while I apparently know so little?
we are the same I think,
aside from the paychecks they collect
from passing on this knowledge
I think perhaps they are onto something though
there are other people too-
those people
those people buy the bumper stickers, calendars, books
from the *they* people
those people put the things
on their walls and in their cubicles
hoping for greatness
from these wise words
printed next to a waterfall
how quickly these words
are forgotten

TIME IS TIME

some days I wish life
moved as quickly as it does in the movies
the sun rises and sets
clouds dance feverishly
trees grow and shed their leaves
in less than a single minute
too bad life is more real
it drags
endlessly
the second hand of the clock struggles
slowly rolling itself over the next second
seconds fight to become minutes
and so on
and we sit and stare
waiting for something to happen,
waiting for something to change
but the only thing that changes
is that nothing changes
in each new second

HALF OF ME

I like the holiday music
the old Bing Crosby kind of singing
turd brown wood
and red shag carpet
simply ornate and ornately simple
I want to know
what an egg-cream tastes like
or a black cow
the long-gone familiar hut on every corner
that turned memories into photos
yes, I remember you
putting the pedal down
in an old-timey car
at the amusement park no longer there
does this make me a relic
meant to rock my life away
in a dusty chair, off in the corner
a crumbling statue
the only reminder
that I did indeed exist
pieces of my life
falling away
as the years go by
you only see what used to be
but do not notice
I am still there

ONLY SOMETIMES

sometimes in the moonlight my heart
skips a beat
not for the yearning of lost love
but in how the moon and the tides
and the heart are connected
the exact moment the tide returns
is when my heart skips
these creaking walls around me
sound like an abandoned ship
old cats wander old brick streets
owls flutter under the moon, hunting for mice
while the other birds sleep
and my heart skips a beat

POETICALLY MOROSE

it is amazing when you try not to think
just how much there is to think about
and your mind chugs like the subway at rush hour
when all you really want is nothing more
than the peaceful hum of a light breeze
blowing through the cracks of your coffin
poetically morose I suppose
but that, frankly, is the silence I long for
a single bird chirping
a bell softly ringing in the distance
without the actual death

SOMEONE TOSSED A MATCH

into my coffin
I was just lying there six feet in,
comfortable as hell
and my skull started burning with madness
I saw the match coming
but couldn't make out the face
the sun was in my eyes
or maybe it was the flames from my burning head
must have done something to piss her off
when I woke up
my head was tingling
and I was hungry
for a flame broiled burger from 1977
and pizza from a hut

or there was the time I was spread out on an operating table
with my chest wide opened
watching the blood run through a tube
into a metal pan and then somewhere off in the darkness
I just sat there wondering where everybody was
where does it come from, I mean,
the craziness?

being shot, stabbed, paralyzed and smothered
by the devil himself or one of his faceless demons
where do these dreams come from?

AND JESUS SAID, BEAT FEET DOWN THE STREET

I asked the old man if I looked like a famous movie star

he said gruffly, “You look like Lassie taking a shit!”

he didn't like lazy
even though he sat around drinking shitty beer,
and plucking at his guitar
if he felt I was being unproductive
a slack jaw, a sloth
a slug
which was almost daily
his opinion would echo off the walls
like the King's speech
“Beat feet down the street and get a job. This ain't no flophouse!”

the old man was greasy, a rattled old hippie Jesus

the very definition of irony
a tattered old rag doll
dragged through a landfill
who would rather spew hate than bathe
schooling me on productivity

I vowed I would never lecture my kids
the way he laid into me
turns out it was just easier to not have kids

A NOD TO THEM

burning cornfields and rooftops
and even water now and then
banging our heads against the hard rock
on the backbone of the wind and rain
throwing stars
looking up to the old and
away from the young
we were barely formed
but mountains
running endlessly with rivers of dew
floating in circles in circles in circles
down a slow-moving current
and gorging on the midnight moon
as sweet as pie
the old wooden porches gossiped all day long
all of us frank, all of us curt with someplace to go
and going no place while our tires spun
blunt force crude to some
and not a care
and if we cared we would still do all of those things
because it was meant to be
what needed to be done
brushing it all off like the dry summer dust

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A SYMPATHETIC EMPATH

empaths are exhausting

convincing the world

it is the weight of everyone else's problems

on their shoulders

or maybe it's just their own bullshit that's so heavy

50/50

the yellow pill
keeps me alive while
the green one
keeps me sane
the green pill isn't working
and I sometimes
wonder why
I keep taking the yellow one

DRAINAGE

I put two and two together
and came up short
that is,
the right leg seems short or at least
shorter than the other
the cuff of my pants shares a commonality
with my life
they are both frayed and unraveling
the bridge of my nose is crooked
hardly noticeable to most but noticeable enough
there is a low hanging fruit
dents in my head and scars on my face
the wrinkles and puffs of skin
are both fighting for the rights over a plot of land
that isn't worth picking with a dull rusty spade
I close my eyes and rest my lumpy head
on the lumpy pillow
on the lumpy bed
and attempt to look at my own brain
trying to find the exact spot that is damaged
deformed
the cancerous lump seething
in anxieties and self-loathing
imagine following a twisting river
that splits into separate channels
and those channels split
winding around
into each other
until there is no beginning or end to any of it
I might be luckier to find a penny
at the bottom of the ocean

A FAILURE TO

there were two men in their twenties
one could not speak and the other
spoke with a mouth full of marbles
I understood some of it

there was a blind boy in a suit
lead by the arm of his brother
he had a blind crooked smile
I didn't know what to ask

there was a skittish young man of fourteen
with a pig nose and bags under his eyes
his laugh was more of a cackle
It was easy to ruffle his feathers
and he pointed his bony finger at you
I did not bother to understand

there is a clownish lady who stands on the corner
and plays the ukulele badly,
plucking its hairs as it screams
she moans out strange sounds like she is dying
no one gives her any money
I pay no attention

there was a young child, eight years old maybe
out of place where we lived
he had a bicycle accident and was never the same
I couldn't understand why

there was another man in his twenties
whose tongue always stuck out
and he hummed a lot
the closer you were the louder it got
I did not care to ask

there was a grey-haired old lady shriveled up in her chair
she stared at the wall and her bottom lip
flapped like a flag in the wind
she never spoke so there was nothing to ask

there was an old man we called Weird Harold
who crouched in the courtyard
a fast talker, all gibberish

and I understood him perfectly

THE BULLSHIT OF PSYCHOLOGY

the details are lost on me
not really sure why it even came to mind
an assignment, the psychology of our permanent records
what an ominous phrase
adults put in the mind of a child
to ensure they stay on the right path
one misstep
one missed step
and it is written in our permanent record
urban legend to some
but they are very much real
they exist
all of our sins, misdeeds
someone hiding in the background
of our lives, watching
collecting evidence
to be engraved in stone
and sealed with blood
what power that must hold
locked in a windowless room somewhere
deep below the mountains of earth
unmarked, untouched,
undiscovered caverns
watching over stacks and stacks
piles and mounds of papers
with the secrets of every child
who had done wrong
and so I saw it
my permanent record
not on stone or covered in blood
but on a brittle, yellowish piece of paper
typed out neatly
perfectly straight
perfectly spaced

perfectly

ridiculous:

Ken is an angry child.

He doesn't have many friends.

my need to laugh at this statement
was met with a need to defend myself
insightful words written by some
wrinkled, curly haired old woman
sitting in a smoke-filled breakroom
sucking one last puff of her cigarette
while she carefully types out the words
to my future

I simply say to her

to the world:

untrue

A GREASY STAIN

sometimes you don't want to be noticed
sometimes you want to sit in a biker bar
where nobody gives a shit who you are or
what your story is
a place where the bartenders face
is worn and ragged
but attractive in a rough sort of way
and it doesn't matter
one TV is rolling today's stocks
while the other has a hockey fight going
everyone looks the same
gray-haired old men
dried in the sun
and their old ladies look even older
next to me is no different
except that he has no hair
he slips the bartender a pill
and I don't care
a dog is barking outside savagely
as if people gathered around were
betting on him
any one of these faces sitting,
drinking
talking and slurring
might have a gun or two
or even a Billy club
stuffed up his ass
just in case something goes down
but I feel safer here than any of a hundred
other bars around
no one is here to fuck with anyone else
they put in their hours for the week
and want to forget the entire week
in a couple of hours

the mirror on the bar across from my seat is covered
end to end with liquor bottles
I can't see my own face
and don't really want to
a conversation starts
he's here with his ex
and they seem drunkenly happy
after twenty years the secret is something about
water under the bridge,
about how you'll never see
that water again
well, I have no one, no exes
to throw in the river
but the old man is right
I suppose most old men are right
in some strange little way
having drunk through their fair share
I can smell tomorrow mornings stomachache
floating off the burnt fryer oil
what isn't covered in grease
is floating in a pool
of stale ketchup and cheese sauce
a sign on the wall:
SHIRTS AND SHOES REQUIRED
BRAS AND PANTIES OPTIONAL
there is a woman a couple seats down
the female Roy Orbison
if you're into that
even she is with someone
a sort of republican looking
bigwig made from the leftover pieces of
Lurch and Frankenstein's monster
there is a fuzzy headed man covered in liver spots
glaring at me with his good eye
no idea what the other one is looking at
I don't know who "Big Dog" Danny is
but he was someone's brother

and loved

I was supposed to meet a friend
a no show as usual
a pattern she is known for and
an annoyance I had gotten used to
for a second I imagined her
face down
in a drainage ditch thrown
from her car
but I didn't much care
to think any more of it
I just kept drinking
and listening to the rain

POETRY

as long as I have thoughts
of memories or
trees or
beautiful women or
things, all things
I will have poetry

THUNDERSTORM WITH THE BEARS

I could wrap myself in the skins
of a hundred black bears
and still feel
the frigid sting of life
slice deep into me
in my ears a silence so unnerving
that the beating of my heart
booms like a thunderstorm
against tin walls
every breath rattles in my lungs
every swish of blood through my veins
is an endless inception of echoes
so deep
a dropped stone
falls forever

A FLOWER WITHOUT SNAILS

absinthe makes the heart grow fonder
they say love
is like a drug
if this is true
I'm having a really
bad trip-

Hitler was a Uniball
and so is my pen-

some people's lives
hang in the balance
of twelve angry men
but it only takes one angry man
to pull the trigger

AS THEY LIKE IT

I played a shrub
in Chippewa Elementary School's
rendition of Shakespeare's:
As You Like It
I was to play the part mysteriously
the person in charge of all this
had some grand vision for my fifth-grade class
to propel her to stardom
this would be her Magnum Opus
and on to Broadway fame
and so I was as mysterious as a child could be who didn't care
more content to be behind the curtain than in front of it
holding my cardboard shrub
and sneaking about the stage like a curious,
somewhat skittish mouse
to the perfect spot
and planting my roots
I sat for the remainder of the scene
behind my cardboard shrub
in a costume made only of a burlap sack
and black tights
with an even more mysterious
boot shaped piece of felt
sewn on my chest
I liked to think of it
as part of the grand plan
but in reality, it was the late 1970's
and we all did things in that decade
we weren't proud of
I very much hate crowds but
in front of them I am somehow a natural
in fourth grade they rather enjoyed
my portrayal of
little Jack Horner

angrily sulking in the corner
I have long forgotten this person
her name, her face, her vision
but I do wonder
if she ever found that fame she was searching for
or maybe the drugs had gotten the better of her
with two productions under my belt
I believe my acting career is on an upswing
and surely I could afford to
toss a quarter to a fellow performer
down on their luck

YOU CANNOT MISS WHAT NEVER WAS
(THE THING WHICH ISN'T A THING AT ALL)

there were no pictures framed upon the walls
or in scrapbooks
or displayed neatly on the mantle
a name was never mentioned
no school picnics, no parties or gatherings
of any sort
not a single conversation
I didn't ask
this was normal to me
"Do you miss him?" someone questions
they always do
ask the man who has lived his life with no hand,
if he misses it
I suspect not; you cannot miss what never was
it isn't a thing at all, and this was normal to me
much later, after death and more death
packed away memories shuffled around from child to child,
there he stood in the faded photo, smiling, looking down
he wore an old sailor's uniform
hunched over like an ape, a face like an ape
a single brow, bushy and thick,
stretched across his ape-ish head
a mistake I thought, he was not a smiling man
angry
drunkard
this is what I was told
pills and booze his only friend
the pills and booze had caused his end

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

the hammer drops
written on fancy paper, the perfect words
to describe your life's work
nothing more than a game
where do you see yourself in five years?
over and over
again and again
maybe think about retirement
in another hundred years or so
we'll see how I feel then

FOLLOW THE HERD

and in that instant
everything was white
and everything else was gone
memories of the immediate past
covered in a clean white ash,
as deep as my knees
it felt as if my feet were sandbags
leaving a ruddy pathway behind me
for someone else to follow
if there even was anyone else
while in front of me
it looked impossible

with each step
the dragging of my feet
sounded like a dying heartbeat
I wondered was there a point
there was nothing left as I turned to look back
and could see nothing but blinding white
on a nonexistent horizon
there was no sound either
as if my heart suddenly stopped
every noise I had ever heard or remembered
sucked into a vacuum
so I did the only thing I could do
I stood motionless
and watched my body disintegrate into the white
until there was nothing

I WOULD

I imagine I came out of the womb
in complete silence
not knowing enough to realize
I needed to cry in order to breathe
oblivious and already numb
to this thing ahead of me
if the woman who had
pushed me out into the world wasn't
twenty years of dust
I might ask her to carry me for a few more years
I would beg if need be
as I was clearly not prepared
I hadn't gotten the notes,
or seen the films
hadn't been properly briefed on the situation
instead I slid out blind
covered in blood and failure
and life was just beginning

ALCOHOL INK

if you ask me what I know about ballet
I will tell you:
nothing

ask a gas station attendant where Brown Street is
and he will only scratch his head

tell a woman you are good in bed
she will prove you wrong

if a bear shits in the woods
and no one is around to see it
he will become comfortable and people will tell you
to always watch for bears

ancient wisdom says:
in the land of the blind
the one-eyed man is king

but still half blind

when you question one's madness
you won't be ready for the answers
but you will indeed become mad

OPTIMISTIC

my eyes are wide open at the moment
but the world is hazy anyway
my arm is tingling
and the coffee is gone
cold and gray
and wet and boring
and frightening
and there is nowhere to move but ahead
an optimistic assumption at best
those of us who share the sickness
rolling in the funk
we know better
the gray is either grayer
or slightly less gray
I can feel teeth
grinding against teeth
my skin is heavy
I feel that too
my face
hands
what is left of my soul
like mud
waiting for a hard rain
to be washed away

DEAD SKIN

in the blackness and back of my mind
nothing is right and nothing is real
and anger courses through my body
like a current burning white hot
shorting out the neural impulses in my brain
pricking at my skin
and deep inside my fragile bones
tempting fate and tempting hate
I want it to stop, to go far away
but it lingers like a storm cloud following me
with every step
nothing feels safe
not even me, I think
I am afraid of the fear
this rage is trapped inside me
with nowhere to go since the beginning
like a diseased animal
covered in the blood and filth of life itself
I hate this hate
and it hates me

UPGRADING TO THREE SHIRTS

it was an unseasonable cold spring day
but I could see it
I could see in the color of the sky
the real spring was close
I'm fixated on my shirt
it is a good ten years old
a blue button-up
and underneath that
a green t-shirt
I contemplate these colors
to an artist color is everything
the blues and yellows
must be just right
better to be just right than all wrong
there is no gray area in this thinking
but more importantly, the color of
my mood
not too much anger
not too much happiness
or this spring day
can easily turn
the color of shit

AND TO THINK IT'S ONLY MAY

I was standing in the alley with the pigeons,
the red bricks bleeding patches of spongy green
“Got an extra smoke?” someone asked
“Nope.” I did not look up
“Well fuck you anyway. I hope you get cancer!”
I expected no less from him
the pigeon laughed and I laughed too and
at the end of the alley where the buildings bent
a man stood pissing on the sidewalk
the flag on top of the tower, terminal,
gave me the feeling of déjà vu
as it flapped in the wind
some memory from childhood
a playground, I think
there was a teenager tempting fate on the corner
chasing his skateboard across the street
the skateboard survived
I looked at the feeble man in the square
by where the fountain spits like a fish
he wears a turban and has a wiry beard
he holds a sign of protest
but does not speak
tomorrow he will not speak of something else
time ticks, moving backwards,
before it stops
and before long it's time to move again

PUDDING

sixty-eight cars, five buses and a hundred more people
hats, badges, bags, papers, headphones, pettiness
all living in a puddle of
insignificant nothingness
shapeless blobs walk through doors
thoughts swell up in my brain
with nowhere to go
cannot take a step without someone's angry breath
burning the back of my neck
there is no place to hide where it isn't still there
everything is twisted, even the moon-
casting crude shadows on
my twisted guts, head and petrified skeleton
even the white noise casts a tepid black haze
limbo is the supposed waiting room
for heaven or hell
but really, they are one in the same

NOTHING MORE

I have met

the people

I need to

there is a world

full of people

I do not want to know

A TURTLE SEES

sun splattered life
across the bricks of the city
I feel no resentment today
today I only exist
nothing good, nothing bad
I hate the blowing snow,
but not at this moment
the aroma of gypsy's beans is in the air
no judgement today either
the pavement is wet
and crunches under foot
the noise is bearable
I draw a circle of lines
not much to this day
and sometimes that is fine
a pause in the music
rustling of papers
a building for sale
and business is open
eyes blinking to the beat of the wobbly table
wooden floor
brown and blackish brown
from a thousand years of footprints
a single eye stares at me
but not really
restless feet
the man with the chiseled jaw stands still
tattered bag in hipster's arms
time moves slowly today
not good, not bad
an oversized hat
on an oversized head
a wave of people who do not wave back
she sits in the distance

typing and squinting
another smiles briefly
people pass
with the tick of the clock,
in the reflection of a picture
how much life there is
in the flutter of a single raindrop

THE CAT SAYS...

lying in the dark
waiting for this day to end
and on to the next
for more of the same
a black lump of fur on my chest
kneading me and needing me
nudging his face in everything I do
pushing him away does no good
he just comes back after a good
crotch licking
his, not mine
it sounds like wet sex
but not in a way you want to think about sex
his raspy, half-hearted meow
really kills me
like something inside is broken
and just like that
he pushes off the bed
digging his back claws into my stomach
Jesus Christ!
back and forth
up the stairs and down and up again
I'm glad one of us enjoys life

THE MYTH, THE LEGEND BUT NOT MUCH OF A MAN

he was a stubborn old clot, for sure
sleeping off a bottle of pills
and a slice to the wrists like it was nothing at all
his blood wasn't blood at all
but thick with oxycodone
uppers
downers
creepers
and still managed to wake up
greeting another angry day
for no other reason than to spite the universe itself
he arrogantly and often spoke of
the time he was shot
and the time he was stabbed
and at seventeen I sat wide-eyed
like a child, looking up to him
It seemed a better choice than walking
through it all with my head down
I see him in the mirror although I don't like to admit as much
the same wrinkles, same scowl
the same distaste for the world
like it owed us something
the world laughed at us
and I accepted it just as I accepted
a mirror as nothing more than a reflection

A NICE PERSONALITY

I have discovered the meaning
of life
sadly, no great epiphany just another
of a hundred random thoughts
which had popped up in the scatter
of my mind
while drinking a lukewarm cup of coffee
in an insignificant dot of a coffee shop
on a slightly less insignificant
corner of some city
in a place no one thinks about
and on and on and on
I certainly did not stand on the table in front
of me and exclaim:
EUREKA!
excitement involves energy and I have neither
I contemplated shouting my discovery to the masses or
at least the four other people drinking their coffee
but then I also contemplated the thought of
being tackled by a good Samaritan
thinking me to be another crazy old man
shouting crazy old things
because my circuitry had malfunctioned
as it does so very often
we are nothing more than dull
puke-ish clumps of celestial Ambergris
a slurry, formed and hardened
in the digestive system of the universe
covered in mucous
and fecal matter
bumping into other star stuff along the way
as we squeeze through
the cosmic bowels
smoothing and softening our rough edges

forming something over the years
that resembles a human being
with all the force and mess of explosive diarrhea:
scientists call it
the big bang
shat out into the world spending much
of our existence covered in star shit,
celestial afterbirth
protons, neutrons and electrons
and after all that we still somehow become
more valuable as we age
what a beautiful thing life is
If you think about it

IN JUST FIFTEEN MINUTES

I was eating macaroni and cheese with senator Bernie Sanders
how many people can say that?
it was a farewell party as he would no longer be teaching
I remember being pretty choked up about it all
even though we had never met
if you want to know the politics of cheese
who better to ask then the senator from Vermont?
fifteen minutes passed and I was done so we said our goodbyes
he had to get back to his cheeses and so did I
it was early morning
and I had the rest of the day to drudge through
in cement filled boots
the road was slushy and slick
and in the dark pockets of it all
I would surely break a bone
if it were possible to spend the day
spinning in my chair throwing darts at the voices
I would
there is uncertainty in the air
the dirt we are planted in is bone dry
crumbling to dust and crunching between our fingers
yet we flourish still, most of us
some find their sea legs upon the drunken rocks
and some pause to step lightly
to have a plan is meaningless
my future has been sealed in the hands
of square-headed men
wearing expensive suites

HOLIDAY EXCITEMENT

it was the day before my forty-sixth Thanksgiving
and I was waiting
other people were scurrying around
cooking and cleaning
but I was waiting for time to pass,
people to call,
seasons to change
I was tired so I laid down on the bed to rest my eyes
I couldn't seem to fall asleep very easily
the house was empty and silent
except for the sounds of a tuning fork in my ears
they have become louder as the years pass on
there was a siren whining in the far distance
followed by the blaring horn of a firetruck
the noise reminded me of a grumpy old man
yelling at the neighborhood children
there was a train rolling by on the tracks a few blocks away
a light snow, or maybe it was rain, was coming down
it sounded like tiny creatures skittering across the siding as it fell
water dripped from the broken gutter onto my windowsill
all the commotions of life
and yet there was a pleasant, still silence

TOMARO IS JUST ANOTHER DAY

they portray it in the movies
real heartwarming with a lot of crying
and soul searching but it isn't really like that
I walked down the patchy grass strip
between the rows and rows of headstones
and I panicked
a God-awful panic
I knew it was there
I had seen the casket
the crowd of people
the hole in the ground
but that was so long ago
I had always wanted it to be just a bad dream
and maybe it was
or maybe I was in the wrong row

TOMARO
1940-1983

it is not like the movies at all
there was no conversation
the words I thought about carefully,
rehearsed over and over in my head were washed away
by a wave of tears I wasn't expecting
It had been a good and not so good twenty years
since I last knelt beside the marble block
with the name:
TOMARO
etched in big, bold, dusty letters.
is it rude to say there was no point to it?
for some maybe but not me
we do it though, don't we?
kneel and put flowers in the ground

About the author:

Ken Tomaro is a writer living in Cleveland, Ohio. His writing centers around life with depression, all of it honest and grounded in reality. A mix of poignant observations, depressive realities and mundane thoughts of those things that make up everyday life. Those things most people would never think about.